DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 386 RC 023 866

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TITLE	Latino Immigrant Women in Memphis.
INSTITUTION	Memphis Univ., TN. Center for Research on Women.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY.; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint, MI.
REPORT NO	UOM14-0203/500-2
PUB DATE	2002-12-00
NOTE	33p.; Contains colored figures and maps that may not reproduce adequately.
AVAILABLE FROM	Center for Research on Women, University of Memphis, 339 Clement Hall, Memphis, TN 38152. Tel: 901-678-3652. For full text: http://cas.memphis.edu/isc/crow/latino_women_memphis.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adjustment (to Environment); *Demography; Educational Needs; Employment Patterns; *Females; *Hispanic Americans; *Immigrants; Labor Force; *Limited English Speaking; Mexican Americans
IDENTIFIERS	Access to Services; Latinas; *Tennessee (Memphis); Tennessee (Shelby County)

ABSTRACT

This report examines the growing Latino population in Memphis and surrounding Shelby County (Tennessee), focusing on demography, Latino workers in the local economy, and a study of the needs and concerns of Hispanic immigrant women. The Hispanic population increased by 229 percent in Shelby County in the 1990s. In 2000, about half of the county's Hispanics were foreign-born, and about 70 percent were of Mexican origin. Demographic information presented includes population growth, national origin, gender, age, family structure, population under 18, educational attainment, home language and English proficiency, employment patterns, income, child poverty, and home ownership. A section on Latino employment and the local economy discusses Latino wages, concentration in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, and males and females in various industries. In November 2001, immigrant Latinas expressed their needs and concerns at a series of meetings in Memphis. A major concern was becoming proficient in English; women saw their lack of English proficiency as a barrier to better jobs, further education, and interaction with their children's school. Latinas also expressed desires to obtain a GED, pursue higher education, and learn to drive. Other concerns were undocumented status, need for affordable child care, difficulties in adjusting to new patterns of family life, and needs for bilingual and culturally appropriate health care and social services. (Contains 65 references.) (SV)

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Latino Immigrant Women in Memphis

2002

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Latino Immigrant Women in Memphis, Tennessee

December 2002

by

Marcela Mendoza

Center for Research on Women

The University of Memphis

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Liberty's Dream

By Jose Guerrero

Blinking one eye, as I gaze at the sun.
Such vast abundance this light.
This pais of plenty is the same.
The shadows bigger, cool even more.

I hide in the weeds, I am one of them.
Life here is risky, unthrifty, barbaric.
For all of my labor, my pay, is the skin of the fruit.
They only eat the meat, discard the rest.

Times are fiendish in their manner.
Require the most from nothingness.
I walk empty in dreams, no driver's license.
No papers to say I am working, living.

In this country, you must excel.
But to excel your name must be a number.
People don't succeed, without numbers,
Even if you don't ask for social security.

I must ask permission, to seek sustenance.
No one barters for skins, it is history lost.
They protect their silos with the Bible and
They are saved, for sharing the runoff silt.

I stay because there is so much of everything.
I want to work and make more, only work.
My hands are thick from work, as is
Their table full and colorful and tasty.

I want to succeed. I want to learn.
I want to make a better life for my own.
I want peace, as it once was,
Before they crossed the oceans.

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Acknowledgments

The following University of Memphis faculty, research associates and assistants contributed to this report: Luchy Sepúlveda Burrell, Sonya Schenk, Ying Huang, and Rajnesh Bhatnagar at the Regional Economic Development Center; Barbara Ellen Smith and Ying-Ying Yu at the Center for Research on Women. I thank all of them for their contributions.

This report is the product of a collaborative project involving the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, the Southern Regional Council (SRC) in Atlanta, and the Center for Research on Women (CROW) at the University of Memphis. The joint project, "Across Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South," combines community-based research with popular education to investigate and influence the changing racial-ethnic dynamics of the region. We are very grateful to the Ford, Rockefeller and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations for their generous support of this project. The ideas in this report do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of these foundations or their staff.

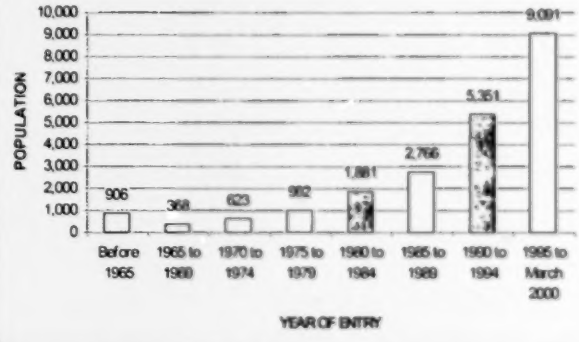
1. Demographics of the New Latino Immigration

In the past decade, the Hispanic/Latino[1] population in the continental United States increased by 60 percent to become the most numerous minority group. According to the 2000 U. S. Census, the Hispanic population reached 35.3 million, approximately 13 percent of the total number of inhabitants in the mainland, with another 3.8 million Hispanics living in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. The projected growth indicates that by 2035, Hispanics will be the single largest ethnicity, accounting for more than 40 percent of the U.S. population. Next to these unexpected results, another surprising demographic story of the 1990s was the dispersion of Latinos out of California and the Southwest to metropolitan areas, smaller cities, and rural areas in the South (Kent et al. 2001). Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee are increasingly attractive to Latinos because of their growing economies, relatively low cost of living, and their weather and recreational amenities (Frey 2002; Smith 2001).

In 1990, for example, just three states—California, Texas, and Illinois—accounted for about 85 percent of all Latino immigrant workers, but by 2000 that number dropped to 68 percent and new patterns of immigration had developed (Paral 2002). Before the arrival of these new workers and their families, long-term residents in many Southern cities had little interaction with Latino immigrants. The dispersal of Latinos means that many more citizens are seeing and experiencing the nation's ethnic diversity. It also means that recent immigrants are still establishing their place in the workforce and the society.

During the last decade, with the dispersal of both recent immigrants and long-term foreign-born[2] residents away from traditional immigrant-receiving states, Memphis and Shelby County in Tennessee gained an unprecedented number of foreign-born immigrants. The secondary migration of foreign-born residents is attributed to the formation of immigrant social networks and the growth of local economies in the U.S. South.

Figure 1: Foreign-Born Population in Shelby County by Year of Entry, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Tabulated by Sonya Schenk, Regional Economic Development Center, The University of Memphis

Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population grew 265 percent in the Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area,[3] and it grew even more (454 percent) in the Metropolitan Statistical Area of Nashville. Researchers at the University of Memphis (Burrell et al. 1997, 2001) estimate that the actual Hispanic population could be much larger than the official count due to the undercount of recent immigrants, particularly single men. Recent immigrants are more likely to be mobile, have complex household arrangements, and limited English-language skills; they are also cautious with government sponsored data collection (Edmonston 2000). Acknowledging the potential undercount of the local Latino population, we report here only on U.S. Census Bureau data. We focus the analysis on Shelby County demographics, including the City of Memphis.

---

[1]"Latino" denotes all US persons whose origins can be traced to the Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America, including the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and South America. Although it is used here as an interchangeable term, "Hispanic" places more emphasis on the influence of Spanish colonialism on Latin American history.

[2]The foreign-born are individuals living in the United States who are not U.S. citizens at birth. The foreign-born population is sub-divided by citizenship status: those who have become U. S. citizens through naturalization and those who are not U. S. citizens (He 2002).

[3]The Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Shelby County (and the City of Memphis), Tipton and Fayette Counties in Tennessee, De Soto County in Mississippi, and Crittenden County in Arkansas.

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According to the 2000 Census, there are 23,364 Hispanics in Shelby County, most of whom (69 percent) are originally from Mexico (Mexican migration to the United States is the largest sustained international movement anywhere in the world, see Phillips and Massey 2000). Mexicans already settled in the region are in a position to help friends and relatives travel northward and obtain work by providing them with information, contacts, and further assistance (Massey and Espinosa 1997). Once the social networks are in place, they contribute to a self-sustained immigration flow (see Palloni et al. 2001).

About half of all Hispanics (12,408 or 53%) are foreign-born, and one-third of these immigrants arrived in Memphis-Shelby County after 1995. The majority (10,161 or 81%) of the foreign-born were not citizens at the time of the decennial census. Such a recent and rapid increase in the number of non-citizen residents from Latin America poses opportunities and challenges to public officials and service providers interested in fostering their successful integration in the local community.

Most immigrants from Latin America arrived within the last seven years. This means that the potential for language barriers is significant—a prospect increased by the fact that Mexicans have lower than average levels of English proficiency relative to immigrants from other origins. Due to their limited command of English, these recent immigrants are more likely to need the services of community organizations and social service providers who can inform and assist them in the process of settlement.

Table 1: Hispanic/Latino Population and Share of the Total Population in the Memphis and Nashville, TN Metropolitan Statistical Areas, 1980-2000

	1980		1990		2000		% Change
POPULATION	Total	Latino % of Total	Total	Latino % of Total	Total	Latino % of Total	Latino Population 1990-2000
Memphis MSA	938,777	8,754 1%	1,007,306	7,546 1%	1,135,614	27,520 2%	265%
Nashville MSA	850,505	5,500 1%	985,026	7,250 1%	1,231,311	40,139 3%	454%

Source: Adapted from Suro and Singer, 2002, pp.13 and 15.

Latino immigrants in Shelby County are predominantly men–almost two-thirds of Latinos are male. Only 38 percent (9,001) of immigrants from Latin America are female–and one-third of these females are children and adolescents younger than 18 years of age. Latino immigrant women in Shelby County are a young population: their median age is 24. Most women are married (75 percent) and live in large family households, with their spouse present. Marriage, particularly for Latino immigrant men, has a positive influence on wages because the responsibility of supporting a family acts as an incentive for workers to search for high-wage jobs and to learn new skills (Rivera-Batiz 1999). In addition to the nuclear family, large family households may also include grandparents, other relatives, and friends who are boarders or roommates. According to the 2000 Census, almost half (48 percent) of all Latino family households in Shelby County included non-relatives. Near half of all Latino married-couple families have children under 18 living at home.

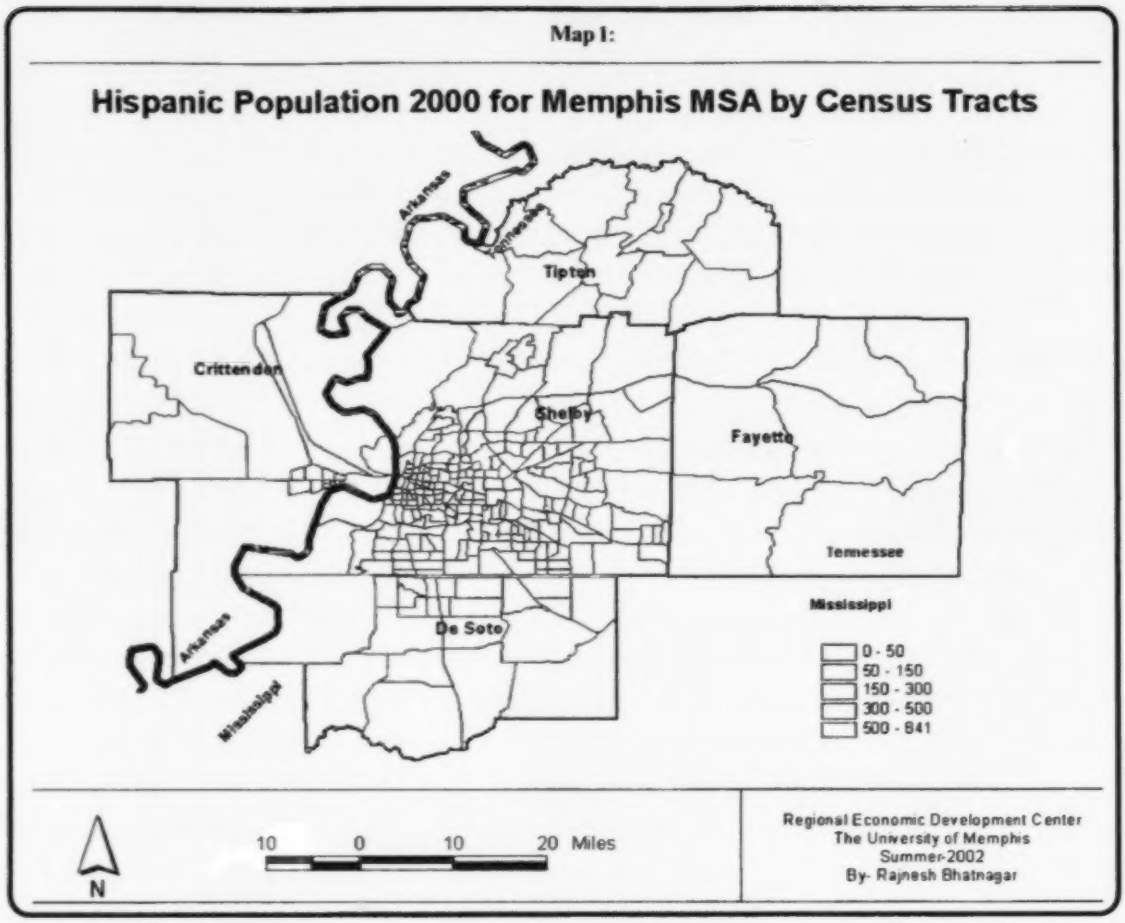
Table 2: Hispanic Population Growth, 1990-2000.

	City of Memphis	Shelby County	Tennessee	U.S. Hispanics
1990	4,455	7,091	32,741	22,354,059
2000	19,317	23,364	123,838	35,305,818
Growth Rate	3.34	2.29	2.78	0.58

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 1990 and 2000.

Two-parent families provide homes for 72 percent of all Latino children younger than 18. The rest of the Latino children live with only one parent, usually the mother. Women with no husband

Map 1:



present head 21 percent of all Latino families with children younger than 18 (traditionally, the percentage of female-headed Mexican American family households has been minimal, although this percentage is growing at the national level).

Latino women in Shelby County have more years of schooling than Latino men. While more than one-third of Latino immigrant men have not completed the 9th grade, less than one-fourth of the women have yet to complete the 9th grade.

As usually happens among foreign-born populations, the most

Table 3: Hispanic/Latino Population by Nationality in Memphis, Shelby County and Tennessee, 2000

	City of Memphis	% Total	Shelby County	% Total	State of Tennessee	% Total
Total Population	**650,100**	**100.0%**	**897,472**	**100.0%**	**5,689,283**	**100.0%**
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	19,317	2.9%	23,364	2.6%	123,838	2.2%
Total Hispanic Population		**100.0%**		**100.0%**		**100.0%**
Mexican	14,087	72.9%	16,191	69.3%	77,372	62.5%
Puerto Rican	742	3.8%	1,215	5.2%	10,303	8.3%
Cuban	521	2.7%	733	3.1%	3,695	2.9%
Other Hispanic/Latino	3,967	20.5%	5,225	22.4%	32,468	26.2%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 Summary File 1, 100 Percent Data, QT-P9.

Table 4: Population, Households, and Persons per Household By Race-Ethnicity in 65 Census Tracts*, Shelby County, 2000

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Other
Population	364,337	190,165	141,808	18,133	14,231
Percentage of Total	100%	52%	39%	5%	4%
Households	137,511	82,271	48,309	4,356	2,575
Percentage of Total	100%	60%	35%	3%	2%
Persons Per Household	2.65	2.31	2.94	4.16	5.53

* Note: These results include only 65 of the 218 census tracts. These 65 tracts had 100 or more Hispanic residents, representing almost 80% of the total Hispanic/Latino population in Shelby County.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000. Prepared by Sonya Schenk, Regional Economic Development Center (REDC), The University of Memphis.

recent Latino immigrants have sought the company and support of co-nationals when choosing a neighborhood to settle. Most Latinos are concentrated in a few neighborhoods: 65 census tracts (out of 218) account for almost 80 percent of the total Latino population in Memphis. Many immigrants live in the Cleveland and Jefferson area in Midtown, the Jackson Avenue-Summer Avenue Corridor, and the Parkway Village, Fox Meadows, and Hickory Hill areas in Southeast Memphis.

Table 5: Percent of the Population under Age 18 that is Latino in the Memphis Metropolitan Area, 1990-2000.

Geographic Area	% Latino Under 18 in 1990	% Latino Under 18 in 2000
Tipton County, TN	0.9%	1.6%
Shelby County, TN	0.8%	2.8%
Crittenden County, AR	0.7%	1.6%
Fayette County, TN	0.6%	1.3%
DeSoto County, MS	0.6%	2.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 Summary File 1, tabulated by The Annie A. Casey Foundation. Kids Count census data online (http://www.aecf.org).

The census tracts with one hundred or more Latino residents are also the tracts where the majority of the Latino residents speak Spanish at home. In Shelby County, 64 percent of all Latinos older than five speak Spanish as home, a finding that mirrors national statistics: the 2000 Census found that 62 percent of all Latino immigrants over the age of 5 speak Spanish at home. Also, 11 percent of Shelby County Latino residents do not speak English at all, while 23 percent speak only English. The degree of English proficiency and the extent of English usage are two different dimensions of linguistic assimilation. Whereas English dominance (i.e. speaking only English) suggests underlying adaptation to U. S. culture, English proficiency by itself does not predict the degree of identification with U.S. culture or the extent to which English is used in practice (Espinosa and Massey 1997).

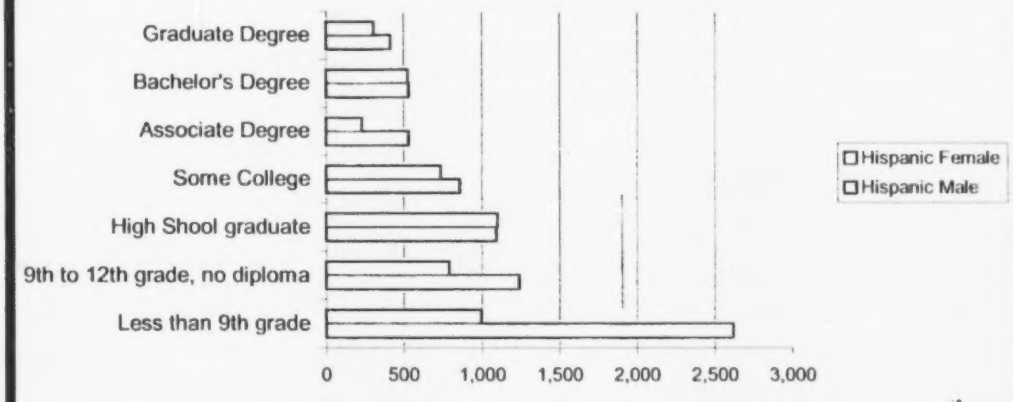
Table 6: Latino Families by Family Type and Presence of Children under 18 years in Shelby County, 2000.

	Shelby County, TN
Total Number Latino Families	6,563
Maried-couple Latino Families	4,778
Other Latino Family Types	1,785
Male householder, no wife present	447
Female householder, no husband present	1,384

Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3) PCT76H .

With the economic growth experienced by the region in the 1990s,

Figure 2: Educational Attainment by Gender Among Hispanics 25 Years and Older in Shelby County, 2000.



Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3) P148H.

thousands of new immigrants went through the difficult initial steps of adaptation and learned how to participate in the Memphis labor market. Latinos' high rate of labor force participation (both male and female) is partly explained by their own reasons for immigrating to the United States. Most Latinos emigrated from their home country for reasons that are economic in nature—such as to find better paying jobs or more favorable employment conditions. Latinos are active in the job market at rates similar to or exceeding those of all working-age adults. Among all Latinos (16 years and older) who were employed in 1999, the labor force participation rate was 84 percent for men and 60 percent were women—although women represent less than one-third of the total working-age Latino population in Shelby County.

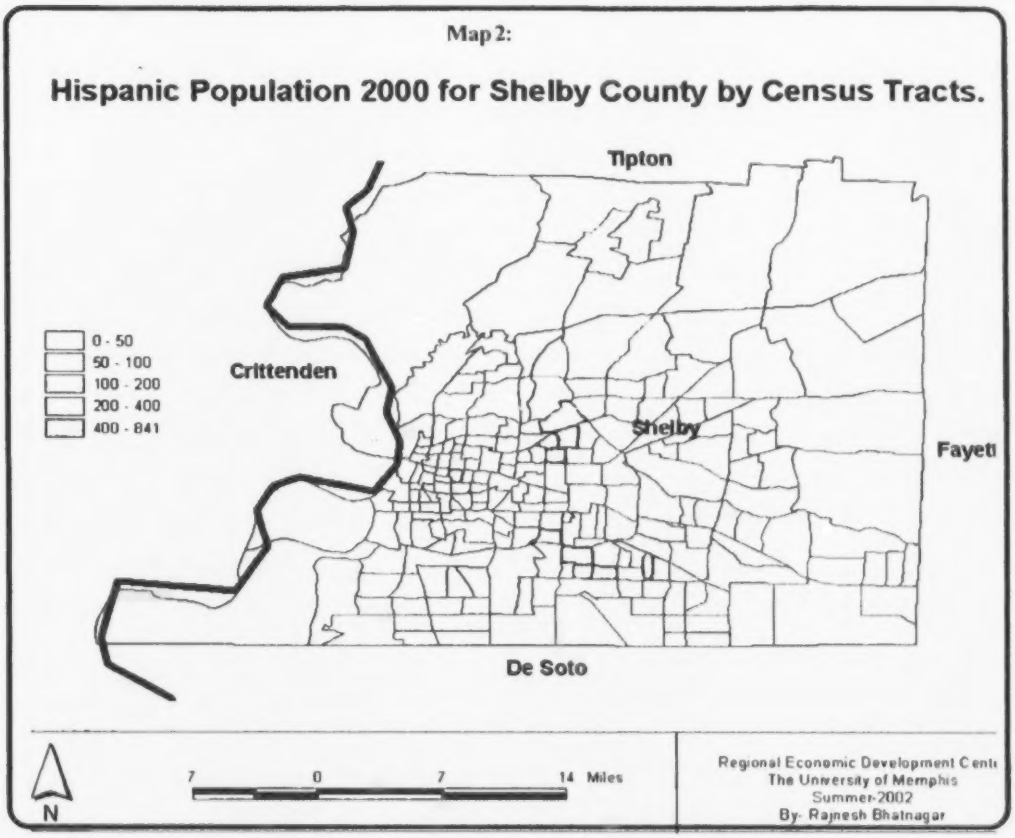
Table 7: Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English Among Latino Residents Older Than 5 in Shelby County, 2000.

	Shelby County, TN
Total Latino population 5 years and over	19,838
Speak only English	4,674
Speak Spanish:	14,674
Speak English "very well"	5,600
Speak English "well"	2,832
Speak English "not well"	4,287
Speak English "not at all"	2,263
Speak other language	182

Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3) PCT11.

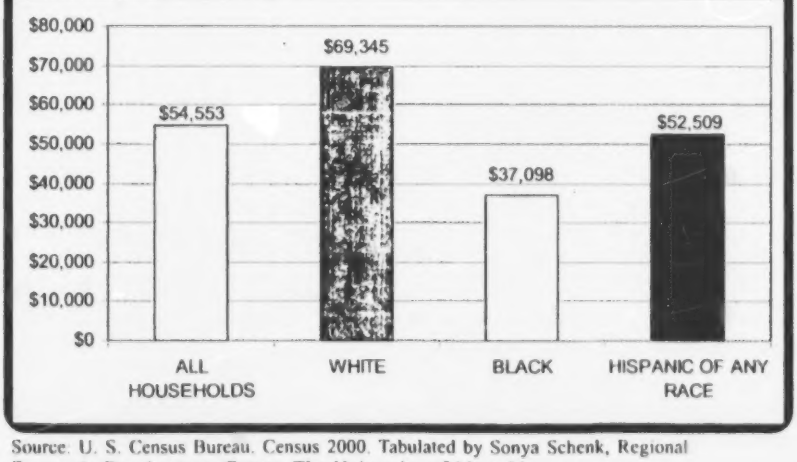
Research demonstrates that social networks—such as having a parent or sibling already settled in town or knowing of other Latinos in the area prior to arrival—influence immigrants' employment, occupational mobility, and wages. However, two formidable barriers still prevent many immigrants, particularly women, from sustained participation in the labor force: inadequate availability of dependent care and undocumented status (see Mehta et al. 2002).[4]

Map 2:



Urban immigrant workers are over-represented in industries with a high risk of occupational injuries. This is a function of the jobs available, the hiring networks in the place where they settle, and the individuals' immigration status. Previous studies indicate that immigrant workers have more hazardous jobs than natives, limited information on job risks, more serious injuries, and limited post-injury medical care (Pransky et al. 2002). These adverse outcomes are exacerbated by lack of workers' compensation coverage and health care benefits. In Memphis, for example, many recent Latino immigrants injured on the job are seen by the Emergency and Trauma Units at The Regional Medical Center (The Med). Also, The Med's Birthplace serves many immigrant women. In 2001, an impressive 10 percent of the 23,000 patients served by The Med were Latino.

Figure 3: Average Household Income by Race-Ethnicity in Shelby County, 2000.

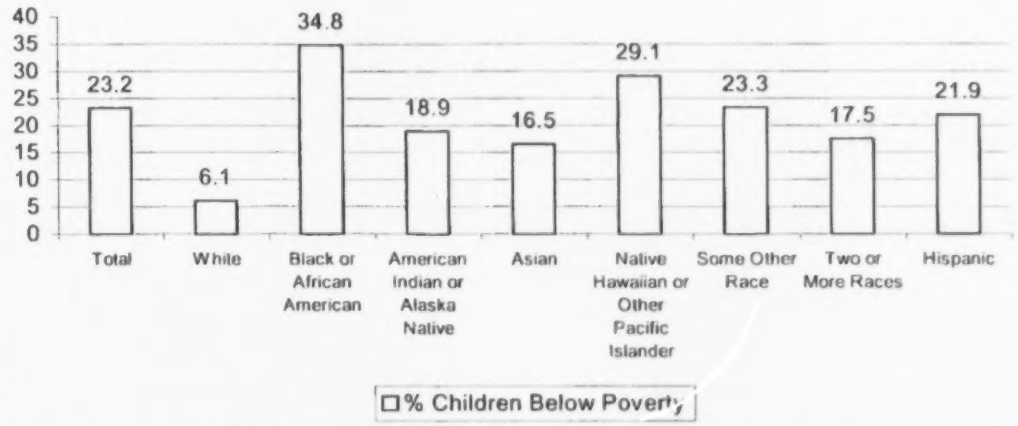


Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. Tabulated by Sonya Schenk, Regional Economic Development Center, The University of Memphis.

Consistent with the profile of a young recent immigrant population employed in low-wage jobs, more than half of the Latino workers in Shelby County reported carpooling to work. Moreover, 55 percent of all Latino workers who use a car, truck or van as a means of transportation carpool to work.

[4]Undocumented workers are foreigners who enter the United States without inspection at ports of entry, or who enter legally but then violate the terms of their entry by, for example, going to work after admission as a tourist, or not departing as scheduled. The number of unauthorized foreigners in the U.S. is not known, although it reached an estimated 8.5 million in 2000 (Martin and Widgren 2002; Passel 2000).

Figure 4: Percentage of Children Below Poverty By Race* and Hispanic Origin in Shelby County, 2000



* Hispanics, who can be of any race, are included in the racial figures shown here.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Summary File 3, tabulated by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kid Count Census Data Online (http://www.aecf.org)

The average hours worked per week do not vary significantly by gender, national origin, or legal status. Latino men and women usually work 35 or more hours per week. In 1999, the median earnings for Latino men who worked full-time year round in Shelby County was $22,291. The median earnings for women was $21,164. When individual earnings are combined as household income, the average income for Latino households was $52,509. This latter figure accounts for all Hispanic/ Latino households in Shelby County—including those that earn less than $10,000 and the ones who earn more than $100,000. However, the median household income for Hispanic householders in 1999 was $36,319.

In 1999, 21 percent (1,380) of all Hispanic families with children younger than 18 in Shelby County had an income below poverty level (cf. Dickerson 2002). Latino women, with no husband present, head 28 percent (389) of these families living in poverty.

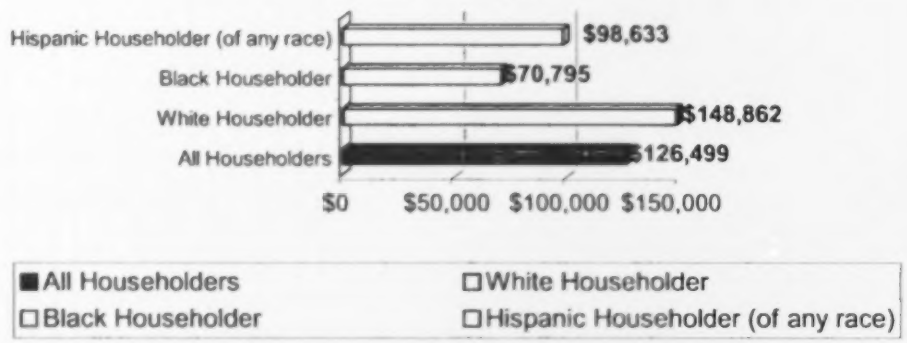
Although a substantial income gap still remains between many Latino family households and all other households in Shelby County, the presence of a burgeoning Latino middle-class and its prospects for future growth should be highlighted—a development that mirrors national trends (Bean et al. 2001). From 1995 to 2000 median family income for Latinos rose in real terms. The poorest Latinos experienced the largest gains. As a result of this gain, Latino poverty rates fell by approximately one-third in the U.S. (from 30 percent in 1995 to 21 percent in 2000).

Hispanics are increasingly becoming homeowners in Shelby County and around the nation as well (Weisberg and Sanchez 2002). The analysis of homeownership in the 65 census tracts with one hundred or more Hispanic residents

shows that 26 percent of the homeowners in those tracts are Hispanic. The average value of their homes is $87,706. The average home value of white householders in the same 65 census tracts is $116,654, while the average value of homes owned by black or African American householders in those same census tracts is $79,465.

Over the next ten years, the number of Hispanic households in Shelby County is likely to increase. Although household projections depend on long-term trends in both the native and foreign-born populations, and it is difficult to predict future changes in immigration policy, the foreign-born Latino population will remain a powerful factor in the county's household growth rate—a trend that matches national projections (see Alexander et al. 2002).

Figure 5: Average Home Value by Race-Ethnicity in Shelby County, 2000.



Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. Tabulated by Sonya Schenk, Regional Economic Development Center, The University of Memphis.

Despite the fact that many recent Latino immigrants live in low or moderate-income households, adult usage of government safety-net programs intended to help the working poor is minimal. Recent immigrants (those with a working permit) and undocumented immigrants are only eligible to receive the following: emergency medical and prenatal care under TennCare, immunizations, school breakfast and lunch, WIC, short-term non-cash disaster assistance, and programs delivered at the community level that do not condition assistance on income or resources and that are necessary to protect life or safety (see ICIRR 1998). Family members of undocumented immigrants who are American citizens (such as U.S.-born children of immigrants) are not restricted from accessing means-tested benefit programs. As a result of changes made to U.S. welfare laws in 1996, immigrants with legal status who arrived in the U.S. after August 1996 are barred from receiving food stamps, TANF, Supplemental Security Income, and other federal means-tested benefits for five years after they achieve legal status (see ICIRR 2002).

2. Latino Workers in the Local Economy

Current research demonstrates that many foreign-born immigrants start out at a disadvantage because of their limited English language skills, poor education (or lack of an education that can be used in the United States), and little knowledge of the lifeways of the host society (Nee and Sanders 2001; Portes 1995; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Powers, Seltzer and Shi 1998; Schoeni 1998; Wright and Ellis 2000). Early in the immigrants' settlement process, they may move into ethnic neighborhoods and take low wage jobs in the local labor market or in the ethnic economy. Employment within ethnic neighborhoods involves working in businesses that, without being marginal to the larger economy, would not exist except for the ethnic community (Catanzarite and Aguilera 2002). Over time, new immigrants gain experience in the host society and access better-paying jobs. Usually, immigrants' economic success and cultural integration depend on both their own characteristics (such as human capital, English proficiency, and length of residence) and other structural conditions of the labor markets and communities into which they settle.

The remarkable increase in the number of foreign-born workers contributed to the expansion of the U.S. labor force during the last decade. While the record period for the highest proportion of immigrants in the U.S. is still the early 1900s (when they accounted for 13.6 percent of the population), the foreign-born population is more numerous today than ever before (it grew by 10.4 percent or 10.7 million persons in the 1990s). Mexican immigration plays a key role in this phenomenon: 42 percent of all the new immigrants that came to this country in the 1990s were Mexicans. Also, Mexicans accounted for 4 percent of the U.S. workforce in 2000. As the number of foreign-born workers rises, more supervisors are learning "survival Spanish" and language schools report a growing demand for training courses on construction Spanish, health-care Spanish, restaurant Spanish, and police Spanish (Martin 2002). Between 1996 and 2000, foreign-born workers contributed to 48 percent of the 6.7 million net increase in the U.S. labor force.

Mexican immigrant workers represent the largest share of all Latino foreign-born workers. Once out of work, Mexicans find new jobs more quickly than other

In 2000, foreign-born men were more likely than U. S. men to be in the labor force (80 percent of those 16 and older, compared to 75 percent of U.S.-born men). Foreign-born women, however, were less likely to be in the work force than U.S.-born women (54 percent of those 16 and older, compared to 60 percent). Foreign-born women who have not graduated from high-school are almost five times as likely to be married and more than twice as likely to have children than their native-born counterparts—both of which tend to reduce women's labor force participation (see Tienda and Raijman 2000). Counting men and women together, the overall workforce participation rates of the foreign-born and native-born in the U. S. economy are equal, at 67 percent. Compared to native-born workers with similar education, more foreign-born men with less than a high-school education are in the labor force. Moreover, the unskilled foreign-born had the lowest unemployment rate in 2000: 4.6 percent compared to 6 percent of the native-born workers (Mosisa 2002).

Hispanics, a result attributed in part to the active informal networks of first generation immigrants (Gonzalez 2002). The labor provided by Mexican workers has been critical to the expansion of U. S. industry in the last decade—one of every five new workers joining the labor force in the period was Mexican (Paral 2002:4). The arrival of significant numbers of foreign-born Latino workers permitted American employers to access needed personnel in a tight labor market (Card 2001). The same applies to employers in the Memphis regional economy.

David Ciscel estimates that Latino workers in the Memphis area had a total economic impact of $1,020,000,000 and generated 35,972 jobs in 2000 (Mendoza, Ciscel and Smith 2001a). This impact is made up of the work Latino workers do in the local economy and the jobs they create through their consumer expenditures in local businesses.

In 2000, Latino workers earned $570.8 million in wages and salaries in the Memphis area, and they paid an estimated $85.6 million in payroll/income taxes. In addition, Latinos generated through their consumer expenditures approximately $12.3 million in local and state sales taxes, and spent $359.6 million in the local economy (see also Mendoza, Ciscel and Smith 2001b). Although most Latino workers earn below $23,000 per year, they have an unusual characteristic for low-wage workers: they tend to have very high savings rates. Ciscel estimates that the typical Latino worker saves almost 30 percent of his/her income. Immigrant workers send a portion of the savings to family members in the country of origin, and also invest in homes and durable goods (see Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996; MaCurdy, Nechyba, and Bhattacharya 1998).

Latino workers play a critical role in the supply of labor because of the close match between the employers' needs and the job readiness of immigrant workers, especially those employed in both unskilled and semi-skilled categories. These low-wage immigrant workers are essential to employers but often neglected under U.S. immigration law. Language difficulties, less than high school education, and unfamiliarity with the U.S. labor market are probable explanations for the high proportion of foreign-born workers in low-paying jobs (Dustmann 1999; Mosisa 2002). English language proficiency is a strong determinant of labor market success

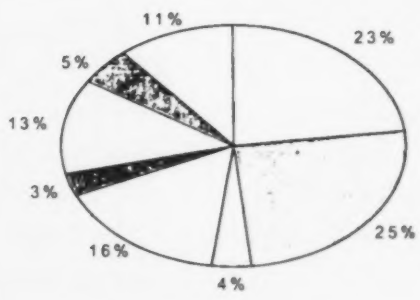
The U.S. Department of Labor reports that among the top 30 occupations with the largest projected job growth in the 2000-2010 period, 16 are job categories that require only short-term, on-the-job training. Those categories include: food preparation and servicing workers; retail salespersons; cashiers; security guards; nursing aides; janitors; manual laborers, and freight stock and material movers; landscaping and grounds keeping workers. Similarly, 22 million new jobs will be created by 2010, with 70 percent of those requiring only "short-term on-the-job training" of one month or less (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2001). This job growth is a consequence of overall shifts in U. S. economy—which requires well-educated professionals and technicians, as well as unskilled and semi-skilled workers. According to the "segmentation hypothesis," immigrants are found in both the highest-skilled and lowest-skilled jobs. The hourglass shape of the immigrant labor pool complements the native-born workforce, where many workers fall in the middle range in terms of skill and education. As a result, immigrants migrate to those segments of the job market where native-born workers are either over- or under-qualified (Griswold 2002:8).

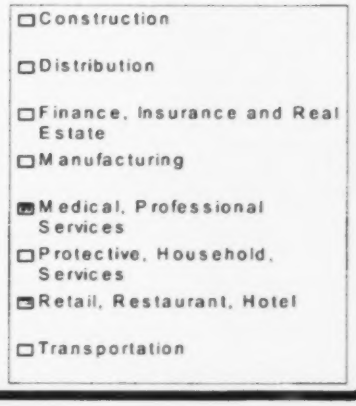
for Hispanics (Richards 1998); also, undocumented immigration status constrains the opportunities of some workers in the U.S. labor market (De Jong 2001; Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark 1996; Lowell, Teachman and Jing 1995; Myers and Cranford 1998).

Employers across the spectrum of the Memphis economy—from warehouses to nursing homes—have sought to hire the new Latino immigrants who entered the secondary labor market during the 1990s. However, there is little available information on the characteristics of this workforce because most standardized national employment data under-represent Latino insertion in local labor markets. For example, in 1997, EEO1 data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission counted only 2,189 Latino workers in Memphis. Acknowledging the need for more comprehensive datasets on Latino employment, we summarize below the results of a survey of employers administered in 2001 by the Center for Research on Women in partnership with The Work Place, Inc. (for a descriptive analysis of the survey, see Mendoza, Smith, Yu et al. 2001). The survey requested information about hourly workers only, and the analysis of the results reported below does not include Latinos employed in managerial or professional positions within the same companies.

Among the 174 Memphis employers surveyed, 77 had already hired 872 Latino nonprofessional hourly workers. The remaining companies did not have Latino employees, but all expressed an interest in accessing these new workers. Transportation and Construction companies in our sample had the highest number of Latino workers per firm. Distribution companies employed more Latinos than any other sector. Medical and Professional firms had the lowest proportion of a labor force that was Latino.

Figure 6: Latino Hourly Workers (Percent) by Industry in a Sample of Memphis Employers, 2001.





Source: Mendoza, Smith, Yu et al. 2001.

The wages paid to Latino workers varied widely across these industries. The Retail, Restaurants and Hotels sector paid the minimum reported wage ($5.75/hour), as well as the lowest average wage ($7.07/hour). Protective, Household and Other Services firms paid an average of $7.16/hour. Construction and Transportation companies reported the highest average wages ($10.61/hour and $11.19/hour respectively). Across the entire sample, Latino workers received an average wage of $9.43/hour. In all industries, Latino workers received wages than tend toward the lower end but are within the typical range for other similarly skilled workers.

The immigrant workforce as a whole is crowded into a very narrow band of low-wage manufacturing and service occupations. Many Latino hourly workers are employed as general laborers or production workers—including assemblers, packers, and material handlers—in the blue-collar sector of Memphis.

Table 8: Latino Wages in the Memphis Labor Market, 2000

Industry Type	Hourly Wages**	Comparative Wages***
Transportation and Communication	$11.19	$10.28 to $15.34
Construction	$10.61	$8.30 to $12.97
Medical and Professional Services	$9.98	$7.59 to $14.95
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	$9.82	N/A
Manufacturing	$9.42	$9.59 to $12.86
Distribution	$8.96	$8.04 to $13.47
Protective/Household and Other Services	$7.16	$6.47 to $10.15
Retail, Restaurant and Hotels	$7.07	$6.47 to $10.97

** Mean wages from our survey of employers
***This range of wages is taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Statistics Survey in 2000. Each survey is reviewed and supplemented by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Included are semi-skilled and unskilled occupations.

Source: Mendoza, Ciscel, and Smith 2001.

Latinos are also concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled positions in the service sector. Most Latino workers in Protective, Household and Other Services are employed as maids, janitors, general laborers, or laundry workers. Within Retail, Restaurants, and Hotels, Latinos are hired as dishwashers, cooks, servers, sales clerks, and maids. In Medical and Professional Services, Latinos are spread across a variety of occupations, including janitors, medical technicians, and nurses' aides.

The only job titles for Latino hourly workers reported by employers in the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate sector are bank teller and clerk, including accounting clerk. The most common job title for Latinos in Transportation companies is truck driver. Most of these drivers are long-haul truckers paid by the mile; however, they clearly fit within our focus on nonprofessional, non-salaried workers.

Table 9: The Top Three Most Common Job Titles in Construction, Distribution, and Manufacturing Reported by a Sample of Employers in Memphis, 2001.

CONSTRUCTION	DISTRIBUTION	MANUFACTURING
Laborer	Material Handler	General Laborer
Line Runner (Electrical)	Forklift/Crane Operator	Machine Operator
Carpenter	Packer	Assembler

Source: Mendoza, Smith, Yu et al. 2001.

Construction and Transportation companies in our sample have a majority male workforce, while manufacturing companies employ more women than any other sector. About 81 percent of all Latino men are employed in Construction, Distribution, Transportation and Manufacturing, while 50 percent of all Latino women are employed in the service sector.

When extrapolated to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, our findings underscore the magnitude of Latino employment in the Memphis workforce. For example, over one-fourth of the city's Construction workforce (26,500 workers) may be composed of Latino men. Also, the estimated Latino labor force in trade, both wholesale and retail, is large—6,975 workers in trade alone. However, due to extensive use of contingent labor in warehousing (or wholesale trade), this latter figure is in all likelihood an underestimate of the extent of Latino employment in these sectors.

Taken as a whole, our findings indicate a pattern of extensive Latino employment in the secondary labor market of Memphis. Tight labor markets during the 1990s made it relatively easy for native Memphians to find employment, and drew Latino immigrants to the city. From 1995 to 1999, the number of jobs in Memphis grew by 54,700 (from 531,600 to 586,300), while the number of workers in the labor force grew by only 35,100. During the second half of the decade, the heart of the Memphis economy—logistics—expanded rapidly, as more and more corporations decided to make this city the hub for their distribution systems. As a consequence, semi-skilled jobs in construction, warehousing and manufacturing became difficult to fill, and employers experienced successive years of labor shortages. Many of these jobs did not require strong English-language skills, and companies moved quickly to employ new Latino immigrants.

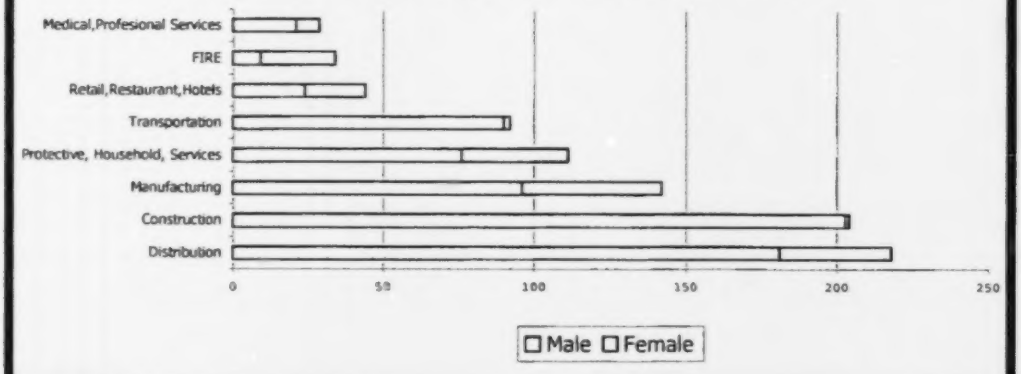
Table 10: The Top Three Most Common Job Titles in Protective, Household, and Other Services; Retail, Restaurant, and Hotels; and Medical and Professional Services in a Sample of Memphis Employers, 2001.

Protective, Household and Other Services	Retail, Restaurants and Hotels	Medical and Professional Services
Janitor	Housekeeper	Maintenance Worker
Laundry Worker	Dishwasher	Nurse's Aide
General Laborer	Server	Clinic Receptionist

Source: Mendoza, Smith, Yu et al. 2001.

Although the results point to extensive low-wage employment among Latino men and women, we believe that they fail to disclose the full extent of their labor market participation. A methodological approach that captured the full range of Latino employment—through temporary agencies, "off-the-books" transactions, private households, subcontractors, as well as regular employment channels—would likely yield not only a larger estimate of the Latino workforce, but also greater evidence of their labor market participation.

Figure 7: Total Number of Latino Hourly Workers by Gender and Industry in a Sample of Memphis Employers, 2001.



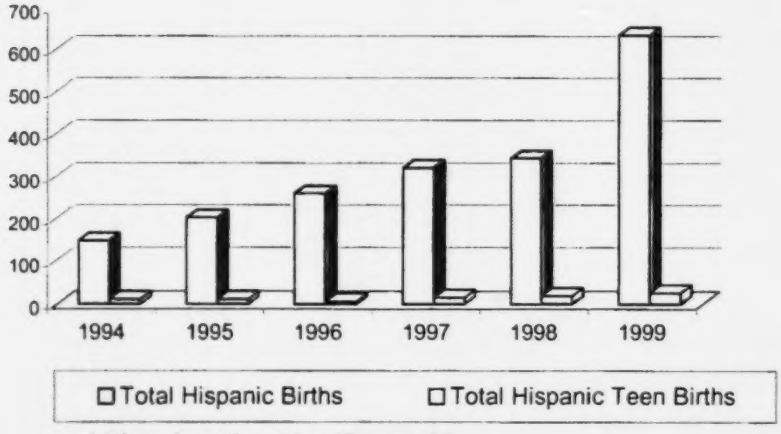
Source: Mendoza, Smith, Yu et al. 2001.

3. Latino Immigrant Women in Memphis

Previous research on the integration of immigrants in the United States has paid little attention to gender issues. However, there is much evidence that women are as likely as men to migrate in search of work, and that women enter the labor market after reunification with family members. Researchers argue that migration produces changes in gender roles and in the situation of women, although the effects of migration may be mitigated by other variables such as marital status and family composition (Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjívar 1999; Pessar 1999; Powers and Seltzer 1998). In addition, the fact that foreign-born immigrant women are in the labor force does not necessarily imply that their traditional gender roles and position within the family have changed.

In Memphis and Shelby County, many immigrant women from Latin America have arrived since 1995. Many were born in Mexico (72 percent of Latino women in Memphis and 69 percent in Shelby County are Mexicans). Such a recent migration means that most of these women are non-citizens, still dealing with the impact of living in two cultures. They experience the losses and adjustment confronted by those who have left behind the significant frames of reference that sustained their cultural identity (see Alvarez 1995).

Figure 8: Hispanic Births and Births to Hispanic Teen Mothers* in Shelby County, 1994-1999



* Hispanic mothers 10 to 17 years old.

Source: Memphis and Shelby County Health Department, 1999, pp.12-13.

These immigrant women are typically young and married mothers: resident births to mothers who list their place of birth as Mexico increased 523 percent during 1994-1999. Also, 4.3 percent of Hispanic mothers during the same period were teens, ages 10 to 17 (Memphis and Shelby County Health Department 1999). Scarinci et al. (2001) estimate that Latino immigrant women's demand for prenatal care will increase over 60 percent in the period 2000-2005.

In Shelby County, Latino women are younger (median age 24) and also better educated than Latino men (only one in five Latino women has less than a 9th grade

education). Many women are employed full-time in low-wage jobs, and they normally car-pool to work.

Most Latino immigrant women speak Spanish at home (64 percent of all Latinos in Shelby County speak Spanish at home). Many women live in so-called mixed-status families (one or more family members are citizens or permanent residents while others have an undocumented immigration status, see Fix and Zimmermann 1999). Extended families usually rent apartments in neighborhoods where other immigrant families have already settled, although Latino families are also increasingly becoming homeowners. These extended families usually combine two or more salaries to support their members.

In 1999, the median earnings for women in Latino households was $21,164. Many immigrant women have probably experienced a wage penalty because of their limited English proficiency and undocumented status. Undocumented status, Latin American origin, being female, limited education and English proficiency all increase the likelihood of a wage penalty among immigrant workers (see Mehta et al. 2002:10). Wage penalties associated with working without legal status are likely the result of a dynamic relationship between employers' biased practices and workers' decision to remain in low-wage occupations. In addition, working through temporary staffing agencies influences immigrant workers' likelihood of being periodically unemployed.

The effect of undocumented status on workers' wages has been widely debated in the academic literature. Some researchers explain that undocumented immigrants earn less because they immigrate with fewer skills, less work experience in their country of origin, little or no English proficiency, and lack of social networks and access to job market information. Other researchers suggest that undocumented immigrants earn less in part because they limit job search to occupations where there is little risk of apprehension or deportation—such occupations tend to be concentrated in low-wage service and manufacturing industries. At the same time, education, English proficiency, and length of U.S. residency do not neutralize the effect of undocumented status on wages (see Mehta et al. 2002).

Immigrant workers in general, and women in particular, experience unsafe working conditions more often than other workers. Latino immigrants give the following reasons for unsafe workplace conditions: lack of necessary safety equipment; insufficient job training; no translated signage; poor ventilation and poor temperature control in the workplace; rapid pace with dangerous machinery; slippery floors; and supervisor intimidation (see Mehta et al. 2002:27).

Latino Immigrant Women's Needs and Concerns: Findings and Recommendations

In November 2001, nearly 250 Latino immigrant women and children gathered at the University of Memphis for the *Primer Encuentro de la Mujer Latina de Memphis*/First Meeting of Latino Women in Memphis, co-hosted by the Center for Research on Women and Radio Ambiente 1030 AM, a local Spanish language radio station. The meeting was conducted entirely in Spanish, and celebrated the first anniversary of the radio program "*De mujer a mujer*" (from a woman to another), created by journalist Mariel Loaiza. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to

strengthen their fellowship and voice their life experiences and concerns as recently immigrated women from Latin America. The meeting grew out of the Center for Research on Women's research project "Across Race and Nation: Building New Communities in the South," which combines popular education with community-based research on the racial-ethnic transformations experienced in the region. Through this forum we shared with resident immigrant women information about various community services and strategies that could help them in their personal lives; more importantly, this forum created a space to listen to and learn from each other's needs and concerns, as a first step in initiating a dialog between Latino women and local activists and policymakers. After the initial gathering, more women attended four additional "*De mujer a mujer*" meetings that reached over one thousand immigrant women and children in Memphis. The topics mentioned below refer to the self-reported needs and concerns of Latino immigrant women, voiced during our first 2001 *Encuentro*.

Education

One major concern for immigrant women is to become proficient in English. The immigrant community has an enormous need for English as Second Language classes, both during working hours and over the weekends. As one woman said: "I want to learn English to understand what people say to me, and also to help my child with homework" ("*Quiero aprender inglés para entender lo que me dicen y para ayudar a mi hijo con la tarea de la escuela*"). A survey administered by the Mayor's Office of Multicultural and Religious Affairs found that young monolingual homemakers[5] prefer weekday classes that would also offer child-care. Immigrant workers prefer weeknight and weekend classes, or on-the-job language training.

Additionally, many women find weekends very convenient because in those days they can normally access child-care and transportation (Mendoza and Mills 2001). As a woman said: "I get back home after eight hours on the job and have to take care of the children, prepare dinner, clean the house; I don't have time to study English during the week" ("*Vuelvo a casa después de ocho horas de trabajo y tengo que seguir ocupándome de los niños, hacer la comida, la limpieza: no tengo tiempo para estudiar inglés en la semana*").

"I'm working at a packing plant but I was a teacher for adult education in Mexico; my problem is that I don't understand English well."

"***Trabajo en una bodega pero en México era maestra de adultos;mi problema es la falta de inglés***".

Limited English proficiency is deeply felt as a barrier to access better jobs and training opportunities. As another woman said: "I'm working at a packing plant but I was a teacher for adult education in Mexico; my problem is that I don't understand English well" ("*Trabajo en una bodega pero en México era maestra de adultos;mi problema es la falta de inglés*").

A number of women would take advantage of tutoring in Spanish to obtain a General Education Diploma (GED)—which is currently offered in a Spanish version. "My husband and I, we both would like to get our GEDs to apply for better jobs" ("*A mi esposo y a mi nos gustaría sacar el GED para conseguir un empleo mejor*"), a woman said. This need is not limited to recent immigrants. Second-generation young men and women who were born in the U.S. and foreign-born individuals from California or the Southwest who did not have the opportunity to complete high school also indicated a desire to obtain a GED.

Many women expressed a desire to further their education at the college and university levels, in particular foreign-born women who had already obtained a

[5] The number of respondents who highlighted the need for English as Second Language classes matches the number of respondents who said they knew "a bit" or no English at all (Mendoza and Mills 2001:8).

college degree in their country of origin. "My daughter was a nurse in Mexico but here she works at a packing plant" ("*mi hija era enfermera en México pero aquí trabaja en una bodega*"), a Mexican mother said. For many of these women, limited English proficiency is still a barrier to their access to higher education. They would also welcome computer classes in Spanish, as a first step to get ready for both advanced education and the job market.

A large number of women would like to enroll in driving lessons, if the lessons were taught in Spanish. Many Latino immigrant women never learned to drive or owned a car in their country of origin. Even those who were already drivers would need training in the rules and regulations of the state of Tennessee. Women know that being able to drive will facilitate their independence and mobility around town. For example, one woman said: "I'm not employed because I don't have access to transportation, but I could borrow a car if I knew how to drive" ("*no estoy empleada porque no tengo transporte, pero podria conseguir un carro prestado si supiese manejar*"). Driving lessons in Spanish and preparation for a job interview were also mentioned as important needs in a survey administered by the Mayor's Office of Multicultural and Religious Affairs in 2001 (Mendoza and Mills 2001:8).

Many Latino mothers who have recently immigrated to the U.S. do not know how to enroll their children in school, and do not understand how the Memphis City Schools/County Schools systems work (grading, transportation, meals, tutoring, PTA meetings, and so forth). They would greatly benefit from the services of bilingual staff at the schools, and from further training and advice on how to help their own children to succeed. Latino immigrant children who have recently immigrated with their parents or who are second-generation children socialized into a Spanish-speaking household need special tutoring in school. They would also benefit from English as Second Language instruction. Nationally, the number of K-12 students with limited English proficiency doubled in the 1990s to five million, but the number of qualified teachers for bilingual or English as Second Language classes remained at about 50,000, or about one per 100 Limited-English-Proficiency (LEP) students. The certified teacher-student gap is largest in new areas of immigration, such as the Mid-South.

Immigration Status and Labor Issues

Many of the recently immigrated women who attended our meetings expressed an interest in achieving a documented immigration status. As one woman said: "I would like to get a job but I'm not authorized to work" ("*Buscaria trabajo pero no tengo papeles*"). A number of these women are living in mixed status families where only the children or a close relative are American citizens (see Scarinci et al. 2001). In convenience-sample surveys administered in Memphis, the main reasons cited by immigrant women for being out of the labor force were child-care issues and lack of work authorization (see Mendoza and Yu 2001; Mendoza 2002).

Immigrant women who are ready to get a job consider that regular day-care centers are too expensive and unfamiliar. As a young mother said: "I want to work but the day-care center is too expensive for me" ("*Quiero trabajar pero la guarderia para los niños es muy cara*"). Latino mothers would very much benefit from affordable and culturally sensitive day-care centers with bilingual staff. Immigrant women are hesitant about choosing home-care providers without references, although many rely on child-care provided by co-ethnics at the apartment complexes where they live. As a woman said: "I was employed at a

printing company in Mexico but now I do baby-sitting at my home" ("*Trabajaba en una imprenta en México y ahora cuido niños en mi casa*"). Many immigrants participate in the fictive kin system of *compadrazgo* or coparenthood that encourages sharing child-rearing responsibilities among parents and godparents (see Lopez 1999).

Advocacy on labor related issues, too, is much needed among immigrant women. Those who are currently employed say: "We know that the employer is abusing us but we can't complain because we can't speak English and do not have proper documents" ("*No nos quejamos cuándo vemos que se abusan porque no sabemos inglés y no tenemos papeles*"). They also say: "The company's manager makes us work overtime and the extra hours do not appear in our paychecks" ("*Te hacen trabajar más de lo que corresponde y después no te cuentan las horas*"). Moreover, job injuries and medical attention on the job are issues of much concern. Working women say: "We are injured on the job and we have to pay our own medical care and do not get paid for the hours we spent in the doctor's office or the medical attention we received" ("*Nos lastimamos en el trabajo y después no nos pagan las horas ni la consulta médica*"). Also, a young immigrant woman said: "I told my supervisor that I shouldn't be lifting so much weight because I was pregnant and she fired me the same day" ("*le dije a mi supervisora que no podía levantar mucho peso porque estaba embarazada y me despidió ese mismo dia*"). Women attributed lost pregnancies to their excessive workload. For those reasons, legal services and advocacy are necessary to address both the immigration status of men and women and to advise them on issues related to workers' compensation, injuries on the job, and compliance with a nondiscriminatory workplace environment.

"I told my supervisor that I shouldn't be lifting so much weight because I was pregnant and she fired me the same day."
"***Le dije a mi supervisora que no podía levantar mucho peso porque estaba embarazada y me despidió ese mismo dia.***"

Latino mothers working in low-wage jobs often get shift work that complicates child-care arrangements to the extreme. Their nonstandard hours disrupt not only their own biological clocks but also their family schedules, parenting and social relations (see Fenwick and Tausig 2001; Hossain and Shapiro 1999; Kahn and Blum 1997). The detrimental effects of shift work are more evident in immigrant families where both parents frequently work overtime and non-standard hours. Women who find themselves immersed in these situations would benefit from extended child-care, and from knowledgeable advice on labor related issues.

Family and Personal Life

The most recently immigrated women find it difficult to cope with cultural differences. Rules and values that were effective in the country of origin prove to be less adequate in the cultural circumstances of the U.S. They miss the support and companionship of the extended family. The extended family in Latin America is composed of three generations that develop close-knit ties. Although grandparents and relatives may not live under the same roof, most interpersonal communications occur within the extended family in the same community, in which the prescribed standards of authority and deference in intergenerational relations are clearly expressed. In contrast, mainstream American culture gives precedence to the nuclear family. Women find these new patterns of family life difficult to handle. They are worried about losing their ability to maintain personalized relations with family members. Their children may try to imitate what they see as "cold and distant" personal relations among mainstream Americans. In addition, women are concerned about the effects of new styles of consumption (what they call "consumerism") on the youngest members of their families. Many mothers experience communication problems with their teenage sons and daughters, who now prefer to use exclusively

English to talk to their parents. These women would welcome counseling and advice, particularly on issues of teen pregnancy, teen drug addiction, and adherence to gangs.

Immigrant women would also welcome psychological counseling to cope with symptoms of depression and loneliness. They eagerly seek to find engaging activities that would help them to overcome tedium, and the isolating daily routine at home. However, Latino women are worried about going out and becoming victims of crime. They tell many stories about the robberies and sexual assaults experienced by female relatives and friends on the streets and at various apartment complexes around town.

To cope with the migration process, some Latino families gradually assume different roles: the husband deals with instrumental activities necessary to function in the new social environment, while the wife centers her attention on present and past activities that connect the family with relatives and friends—keeping alive the family's own cultural past. Through time, men may establish new networks while inward-oriented women may become increasingly isolated. Isolated women are potential victims of domestic violence. A number of immigrant women recounted situations of abuse by their husbands and partners. They would welcome counseling and support to prevent these situations.

In 2001, according to a report by the Memphis Police Department, 34 Latino women were victims of rape. While Latino immigrants constitute a relatively small segment of the population, they experience crime in disproportionate numbers. For example, from January through September 2002, the Police Department reported that 3,902 Latinos were victim of crimes. This means that almost one in five Latinos in Memphis has been a victim of crime in the last six months. Latinos were targets of 25.8 percent of all individual robberies reported in Memphis since January, with most of the crimes occurring in the Parkway Village-Hickory Hill area. 50 percent of individual robberies in the East Precinct were committed against Latinos, and the overall crime statistics regarding Latinos were similarly appalling in 2001.

Health Issues

As our city becomes more ethnically diverse, health care providers face growing challenges to ensure that patients with limited English proficiency (LEP) have adequate language assistance. Bilingual interpreters and translated written materials at local hospitals and health clinics are absolutely necessary; otherwise first generation monolingual women won't be able to understand the providers or comply with medical treatments. A recent report by The Access Project highlights the need for interpreter services at The Regional Medical Center (Andrulis, An, and Pryor 2001). Almost all LEP respondents to an on-site survey said that interpreters were not readily available. Only four percent of these respondents said they noticed signs in the waiting area in Spanish, and only 15 percent said they were given written information in Spanish. One of six respondents said either they did not understand or were not provided instructions for taking their medications. More research is needed on medical errors and adverse consequences associated with having untrained or no interpreters for LEP children and their families. Failure to

consider culture and language issues in clinical encounters can lead to a variety of adverse consequences, including decreased satisfaction with care, medical errors, difficulties with informed consent, inadequate analgesia, fewer prescriptions, and use of harmful remedies.

In addition, Latino immigrants will benefit from culturally appropriate health communication strategies designed for diverse populations. For example, many women said that they would welcome information about prenatal care, breastfeeding, and pediatric care. Topics such as family planning, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases were mentioned at our meeting as well. A number of women voiced their interest in learning more about cholesterol, healthy nutrition, and exercise. All of these topics should be addressed in Spanish, in a culturally competent manner.

In sum, to be effective, social services intended for recent Latino immigrants should be offered by bilingual (and ideally bicultural) staff. Through time, Latino women will improve their English proficiency, advance their education, and adapt to circumstances in the U.S. However, at this point, a culturally sensitive bilingualism is required to efficiently reach those immigrant women in the local community who are most in need of services.

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